

**CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016 AT 2.00PM**

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

CL Reeves

HJ Townsend

PJ White

HM Williams

Apologies for Absence

CE Smith

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Jo Lloyd-Jones	Team Manager - Fostering
Deborah McMillan	Corporate Director Education & Family Support
Darren Mephram	Chief Executive
Susan Roberts	Group Manager School Improvement
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities
Wendy Wilcox	Group Manager – Disability Transition and Case Management
Mark Wilkinson	Group Manager - Learning Disability

136. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

137. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 20 July 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the following:-

The Cabinet Member – Communities being added to the list of attendees at the meeting, and that where reference is made to Cabinet Member – Resources in Minute 132 on page 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, 16<sup>th</sup> line of that paragraph, of the Minutes, this be changed to Cabinet Member – Communities.

138. CHILD PRACTICE REVIEW

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing submitted a report, that provided the Committee with information in respect of the most recent Child Practice Review (WB B 15 2014) published on 24 August 2016.

She explained of the background to the report and of the sad story surrounding the case in question. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing, also advised that the term Child Practice Review had replaced the previous term for cases of this nature recognised as Serious Case Reviews.

She then advised that there were two types of Child Practice Reviews, and these were Concise Reviews or Extended Reviews. Further explanation of these and the difference between the two was detailed in Paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the report.

The report also advised that going forward in this area, it was important for multi-agency groups to work closely together, in order to avoid sad occurrences such as the one subject of the report arising in future and lessons being learnt. That meant close liaison, investigation and sharing of information between statutory bodies such as Social Services, the Police, Health and the Probation Office amongst others. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing added that agencies such as the above came together as part of a Safeguarding Board that had been established as part of Western Bay.

This section of the report advised also of two further Reviews that were currently ongoing.

The Head of Children's Social Care then gave a powerpoint Presentation with regard to the Child Practice Review published last August.

A Member asked, if despite the lessons that had been learnt as a result of the above case, was there still a risk of disconnection between key organisations such as Health and BCBC in terms of monitoring of vulnerable children and families and the consequences of any failings regarding this from a lack of communication between these bodies.

The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed that there was always some element of risk in terms multi-agency child protection agencies communicating and sharing information to an optimum level, however, it was about putting in place policies, plans, procedures and mechanisms, that would hopefully eradicate these situations taking place. She added that a Specialist Health Visitor's post had been introduced and a person had been appointed to this position, and things such as this and Social Workers along with employees from Health in localised Hubs had resulted in an improved way of working.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing added, that recently a new community care information system had also gone live, which would improve methods of engagement with agencies such as ABMU, and that this system would be expanded to other key organisations over the next 18 months or so.

A Member asked Officers how many other children and/or families were in a situation of risk similar to L, and had she been on the Child Protection Register.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that the Review carried out had been a Concise Review, as it satisfied the criteria of this as opposed to the Extended Review criteria. One of the criteria of a Concise Review, was due to the fact that L was not on the Child Protection Register when the review was carried out. By way of background information, she added that if a child was referred to Social Services, Social Workers had to ascertain the level of care and support that was required for the individual, including whether or not the case should be closed and the child referred to other specialist services, or retained within the auspices of the local authority with the view of Social Services providing the child with a suitable Care Support Plan. There were around 800 children residing within the County Borough currently being provided such a Plan. If it was a case of a Child Protection issue and the local authority considered that the child was at risk of harm, then it would be necessary to involve bodies such as the South Wales Police and other multi-agency organisations. At this stage the child would

then be placed on the Child Protection Register, and would have put in place a Child Protection Plan.

The Head of Children's Social Care added that if a child becomes looked after, this was due to the environment they were in at the time, ie that they find themselves in an unsafe or uncompromising position. An example of this she added, was if a Child Protection Plan put in place had not worked out as had been firstly anticipated.

A Member asked if any contact took place between siblings who were looked after, and any immediate family such as parents or grandparents etc.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that the Social Services Department always promoted contact in situations such as this, other than if the child had been adopted or placed with foster parents. Even in these situations however, the natural parent(s) could still keep in contact with the child via correspondence.

The Chief Executive added that anything that had previously fallen between two stools in relation to this particular Child Practice Review or in respect certain other cases had been addressed through the likes of Action Plans put in place by the Western Bay Safeguarding Board, and these Plans applied to all reviews irrespective if they were in respect of children or adults. This was more on a national wider basis, however, a more local Action Plan had also been introduced through the Corporate Safeguarding Board.

The Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing asked if the circumstances regarding the Child Practice Review (WB B 15 2014) could in any way have been avoided if the case had been managed more closely.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that a subsequent Review undertaken in respect of the way this case had been dealt with and managed, highlighted that unfortunately the outcome would have been the same as it was in any event.

A Member asked Officers what was considered as a suitable caseload for Social Workers, and how the Directorate could ensure that any future recommendations that are made in respect of a Review are carried out, especially in the face of continued limited resources.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that Social Workers would normally have a maximum of 17 cases at any one time, and these are monitored. Unfortunately however, a minority of Social Workers had higher cases than this due to ongoing high workloads, though this was also being monitored with a view to reducing these to a more manageable level. This was difficult though, as the work was of high importance and the amount of incoming cases was to all intents and purposes not controllable. Management were also looking at ways to ensure steps are put in place in terms of more effective methods being applied not just with regard to the recruitment of Social Workers, but also in terms of retaining these Officers.

The Chairperson asked if all the actions recommended in the appropriate Action Plan had now been implemented, including by agencies external to the local authority.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that all the recommendations made that related to the work areas of Children's Social Care had been addressed, and that she would check with the other multi-agency groups to see if they had also addressed any recommendations that came under the direct responsibility of them, and give feedback to the Chairperson outside of the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting noted the report.

139. **DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TRANSITION SERVICE MODEL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report, which informed the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting of the work undertaken in respect of the development of a new service model for young people in transition from Children's to Adult Services, and to seek approval to undertake wider engagement with staff and stakeholders in respect of the proposed new service model for transition in moving forward.

The report outlined certain background information, and advised that a Multi-Departmental Project team had been established to take work forward including key stakeholders involved in transition, covering all specialities within Adult Social Care, as well as representation from the Disabled Children's Team in Children's Services, and the project has followed a project management approach, with support being provided by the corporate Project management team.

The Group Manager, Disability Transition and Case Management confirmed that a range of workshops (totalling three) had taken place involving those key stakeholders identified in the report in order to:

- Fully appraise the current transition service model in Bridgend;
- Reconsider and review the proposal made via the Western Bay Learning Disability Programme; and
- Refine the proposed new model, in order to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

In response to the work carried out in the workshops, an alternative 'phased approach' a proposal was then drawn-up by the Project Team, which addressed certain concerns highlighted in the report, and was in-keeping with the requirements of the new Act, as well as being a manageable and realistic proposal in terms of being implemented effectively within the required timescales. These phases were Phase 1 – A Transition Key worker model, and Phase 2 – A Western Bay optimal model. Further information on these was outlined in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 of the report, respectively.

The Group Manager, Disability Transition and Case Management then concluded her submission by advising of the reports financial implications with regard to the new Transition Service Model for Disabled Children and Young People.

The Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing welcomed the new model and the fact that an Equality Impact Assessment would be carried out in due course, in order to assess any potential impact the model would have on individuals and staff.

He also praised the good work that was being undertaken in the Bridgend Resource Centre, but he asked also, if there was sufficient space at the centre to accommodate the extra staff that may be placed there, to support the introduction of the new model.

The Group Manager, Disability Transition and Case Management confirmed that a number of staff had already re-located and that there would be room available for future staff, on a phased approach.

The Chief Executive referred to the reports financial implications and enquired if any savings would be realised in due course as a result of the introduction of the new model.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing, advised that the model would ensure that there is increased close-up working between staff in both Children's and Adult Services, which may lead to the opportunity to realign staff resources.it was difficult to predict to what extent savings would be made but the service understood the need to make efficiencies and this would be given due consideration.. Earlier intervention though by departments and agencies working together more collaboratively would also ensure a service efficiency. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing added that she would be in a better position to establish if any savings were to be made following the introduction of the new model in around 6 months time when it started to be more established.

**RESOLVED:** That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee:

- (1) Noted the information contained in the report.
- (2) Approved to undertake wider engagement with staff and stakeholders in respect of the proposed new service model for transition in moving forward.
- (3) Noted that a further report will be presented to the Committee in the future, to include details regarding any financial implications, as a result of the introduction of the Service Model, and proposing a new Model for transition in the longer-term which will have been finalised based on the findings from the engagement.

140. **INFORMATION ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL FOSTERING FRAMEWORK**

The Head of Children's Social Care presented a report, the purpose of which, was to provide the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting with information about the work done to date on establishing a National Fostering Framework.

She added that the report should be read in conjunction with the National Fostering Framework briefing paper attached at Appendix 1 to the report. This paper provided additional information, and was prepared by the Project Manager of the National Fostering Framework, for the intention of enabling the Strategic Steering Group to agree and support specific work streams and projects going forward. It had also been revised to include BCBC specific data.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that the Framework would also improve the co-ordination of a number of different plans, policies and protocols and assistance more effectively in monitoring performance.

Paragraph 3.3 of the report advised that the case for change was hugely supported, and that there was a strong consensus about creating a National Fostering Framework, and this section of the report outlined the likely component parts of the framework.

The creation of a National Framework, was seen as a means of ensuring that known concerns are addressed, and to introduce greater consistency without sacrificing the acknowledged strengths and diversity of local accountability within the current system.

The Head of Children's Social Care referred to the present situation, and confirmed that a Strategic Steering Group had been established, with representation from Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Association of

Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru, the Fostering Network, Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru, Voices from Care, a designated Doctor for Looked After Children, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Education, the Childrens Commissioning Support Resource (4C's) and Cascade, with this group providing strategic oversight and direction. Implementation of each of the recommendations endorsed by the Steering Group was anticipated to take place over two to three years, through a workstreams programme.

Paragraph 4.2 of the report then outlined examples of what the Work Programme for 2016-17 would include, whilst paragraph 4.4 of the report gave examples of what the development of a National Performance Framework would provide the local authority with an opportunity to do and improve upon a number of different work themes.

A Member was pleased to note from page 39 of the report, that the number of approved BCBC Foster Parents had increased from 104 in March 2012 to 155 in March 2015.

The Team Manager, Fostering Services confirmed that the Council were concentrating upon increasing the number of local Foster Carers, and improving marketing methods to continue to achieve this. She referred Members to page 40 of the report, where it detailed further information on foster caring, as well as giving information regarding the All Wales gross expenditure for fostering services, excluding kinship foster care. This was broken down for 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, and included details of expenditure and the number of children being looked at during these periods, in terms of local authority foster care and foster care provision from the independent sector.

The Cabinet member Resources asked Officers whether or not the Council had an In-House Complex Care team.

The Team Manager, Fostering Services replied that there was such a team in Children's Social Services.

A Member advised that would-be foster carers and existing foster carers had shown an interest in the "When I'm Ready Scheme".

The Team Manager, Fostering Services advised the Committee that this was a relatively new scheme, but that it was receiving some positive interest. She advised however, that additional foster carers would be required in order to support this scheme.

The Cabinet Member Equalities and Children's Social Services advised that Orders from the Court had to be given to place children in Out of County placements, including for specialist therapy treatments, and this obviously came at a significantly high cost. She asked if there were any initiatives ongoing or being considered, to provide such specialist care packages in-house or more locally.

The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed, that this was being looked at as part of the Residential Care Re-Modelling Programme work upon which was currently ongoing.

**RESOLVED:** That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting noted the information contained within the Briefing Note and the Phase One report.

**141. STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO THE SUPPORT OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support gave a report, which both updated and informed Committee on the support being delivered to improve the educational performance of vulnerable children in Bridgend.

The Group Manager School Improvement by way of background, advised Members that it was recognised that the gap in performance between vulnerable groups and more advantaged peers puts them at increased risk of exclusion, poor attendance, behavioural problems, as well as social emotional issues. This could lead to these children leaving education without the skills or qualifications required to become independent adults.

She then confirmed that across Bridgend, there was an improving trend in GCSE performance at grades A\* - G for looked after children, and in 2014/15 no looked after children left education at the age of 16 without a qualification, and referred to various data included in the report that substantiated this, including at the different levels of Key Stage pupils.

The Group Manager School Improvement also advised however, that the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals was generally improving in every key stage (with a drop at Key Stage 4 in 2014, followed strong performance in 2015). She explained that this was similar to the national trends in which there were improvements in every key stage.

She also advised that it was encouraging to note, that 3 pupils from Year 13 Cohort had progressed by going on to University.

The Group Manager School Improvement then confirmed that the strategic approaches detailed in the report, were not targeted solely at Looked After Children but also young people on the edge of care.

Paragraph 3.5 of the report, detailed information on how Children's Services were maintaining and building upon improvements made to date, and the Group Manager School Improvement added that the Vulnerable Groups Strategy raised awareness in certain key areas, as well as looking at more innovative ways by which to hopefully close the gap in terms of learning between groups of children that were deemed vulnerable in comparison to those which are not, in order to maximise their levels of achievement, and to this end, there had been a multi-level strategic approach to supporting and targeting the educational performance of these children.

The next part of the report referred to Exclusions and the Fair Access Strategy, and the Group Manager School Improvement confirmed, that following the pattern of a high number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, A Fair Access Strategy Group was formed and an Action Plan devised for 2015-16 and details of this were included in Appendix D to the report.

With regard to the report's financial implications, the Group Manager School Improvement highlighted that there weren't any, as the initiatives described throughout the report were being met through a combination of Pupil Deprivation Grant for Looked After Children and existing resources.

The Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing, referred to the Fair Access Action Plan, which identified the need to have robust tracking, in order to analyse the data and provide targeted early prevention and intervention to meet the needs of children and young people, (Appendix C to the report referred). He welcomed this approach. He noted that Maesteg Comprehensive School was one of the highest schools in the County when it came to free school meals for pupils, and with regard to this, he asked if the formula for tracking was consistent and applied the same for all such schools situate within the County Borough.

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The Group Manager School Improvement confirmed that the tracking applied was the same in terms of consistently being applied across all BCB's secondary schools. The database used for this was known as SIM's, and this accounted for the support of children who were recognised as vulnerable or with other needs.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee considered and noted the report.

142. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 4.31 pm